BEFORE THE DAYBREAK.

Before the daybreak shines a star
That in the day's great glory fades;
Too fiercely bright is the full light
That her pale-gleaming lamp upbraids.

Before the daybreak sings a bird
That stills her song ere morning light;
Too loud for her is the day's stir,
The woodland's thousand-tongued delight.

Ah! great the honor is, to shine
A light wherein no traveller errs;
And rich the prize, to rank divine
Among the world's loud choristers.

But I would be that paler star,
And I would be that lonelier bird;
To shine with hope, while hope's afar,
And sing of love, when love's unheard.

F. W. BOURDILLON.

OLD VANDERHAVEN'S WILL.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

A golden summer evening some fifteen years ago. The shadow of the Belfry Tower lay aslant the sunny market-place of the ancient city of Bruges, and the musical chimes fell sweetly on the warm, still, evening air, as they played the Shadow Song from Dinorah.

The old houses which surrounded the place, with their quaint 'step' gables, carved timbers, and deep-set casements, seemed to have fallen asleep in the sunshine, dreaming perhaps of the days when Bruges was one of the centres of the world's commerce; when her haughty burghers lived like princes, and the ministers of twenty nations resided within her walls.

One of the largest and most picturesque of the ancient tenements—formerly the Guild-house of a wealthy corporation—was occupied by M. Nicholas Vanderhaven, who, after a busy and prosperous life as a merchant at Antwerp, had retired to spend the evening of his days in his native city.

On the first floor, looking out on the Market-place, was a spacious apartment which had been the banquet chamber of the Guild, and was now used as a studio by M. Vanderhaven's grandson. No artist could have desired more harmonious surroundings. The room, though unfurnished, was a picture in itself; with its painted ceiling, walls panelled in dark polished oak, superb Renaissance chimney-piece, and the sixteenth-century tapestry that hung before the door.

The only occupant of the room this summer evening was Bernhardt Vanderhaven, a handsome, dark-eyed young fellow, with mustache and short pointed beard, dressed, with a certain affectation of carelessness, in a quaintly-cut velvet blouse and open collar.

He had drawn his easel close to the window to catch the failing light, and was painting industriously, puffing at his cigarette meantime, and only pausing now and then to cast a half-reproachful glance at the darkening sky.

At length he drew back, looking at his work with a critical frown. Gradually his brow relaxed, and a smile stole to his lips.

'Yes, it is like her' he muttered; 'very like! Just that wistful look in the eyes, and the tender, trustful smile I know so well. My sweet Annette!'

The painting was a half-length portrait of a young girl in the richly picturesque costume of a noble Flemish lady of the seventeenth century; a girl with a delicate, oval face, only faintly tinted with rose-color; sweet, smiling lips, and softest hazel eyes, which had a dreamy, 'out-looking' gaze that gave a touch of spirituality to her beauty. The young man studied every line of the sweet face as if he had never seen it before. So absorbed was he that he did not hear the opening of the door, and started when a familiar voice behind him said, drily: 'I fear I am interrupting you, Bernhardt. Shall I come again when you are less occupied?'

'You caught me dawdling for once, grandfather,' the young man answered, turning towards the intruder with a pleasant smile; 'but I have been working furiously all day, and my picture is nearly finished.'

'I am glad to hear it,' was the reply, as, without even glancing at the canvas, the intruder took his seat on the only chair the room contained, unceremoniously sweeping on to the floor a heap of drapery which encumbered it.

Monsieur Nicholas Vanderhaven was a handsome, vigorous man of seventy, with few signs of age about him, save his silvered hair and the thick, white brows, beneath which his keen eyes glittered 'like fire under snow.' His chin was square and firm, and his closely-shut mouth would have been terribly grim but for some lines about the corners, which showed a gleam of humor and kindliness. His face was a pretty fair index to his character; shrewd, hard, but not unkindly, and capable on occasion of generous impulses.

'I am glad to hear it,' he repeated. 'There has been enough, and rather too much, of dreaming and daubing: it is time you began life in earnest.'

Bernhardt raised his brows.

'I thought I had begun it in very serious earnest,' he returned, with a half smile, standing with one foot on the rail of his painting stool, and his elbow on his knee. 'I have worked hard enough lately to satisfy even you, Monsieur.'

'Worked? humph, well—if you call that work. But who is the better for it? What comes of it all?'

'Nothing yet perhaps, but fame and fotrune will come of it some day—at least, I hope so,' added Bernhardt; 'and that hope is my guiding star.'

'A will-o'-the-wisp that will lead you into a swamp,' was the encouraging comment.

The young man laughed, and tossed back his long hair.

'Come, grandfather, how can you tell what my chances are?' he said good-humoredly; 'you never even glance at my pictures. I should be glad if you would, for you are an excellent judge of painting, though you have such a contempt for artists.'

'Artists who are worthy the name have my admiration and respect,' answered Mr. Vanderhaven deliberately. 'I only despise those shallow pretenders who make art an excuse for idleness and affectation; for wearing abnormal coats and beards' (his listener winced slighted); 'leading abnormal lives, and being altogether chartered as Bohemians. However, enough of that,' he continued. 'I want to have a little serious talk with you.'

The young artist gave a resigned sort of shrug, and perching himself on his painting-stool, prepared to listen.

'You will be twenty-one on the first of next month,' his grandfather began. 'You have not forgotten our agreement?'

'No, sir; I have not forgotten. You were to leave me free to follow my own devices till I was of age, then I was to choose between art and commerce; to decide whether I would go on with my painting, or join my cousin in the house at Antwerp, of which you are still the nominal head.'

'Exactly. Well?'

'Well—I have chosen art, or rather art has chosen me. She has called, and I must follow, whether she rewards me or not. I am sorry to disappoint you, grandfather, knowing you had set your heart on my entering the firm, but—it is impossible. I should never be a man of business. I am a painter or nothing.'

Ominously grim grew his companion's face as he listened, and the lines about his mouth had nothing humorous now, but he replied quietly enough.

'Very good. You are prepared to take the consequences of your decision, I presume?'

'The consequences? I am prepared to work hard and bide my time, if that is what you mean.'

'Not quite. Are you prepared to earn your own living? Will your brush find you food to eat, clothes to wear, and a roof to cover you?'

'Well—not yet, perhaps; I haven't tried to sell my pictures; but after a time—'

'After a time, when fame and fortune have found you—just so. Meanwhile, you see, like many another "genius" before you, you stand a chance of starving in a garret.'

Bernhardt stared at him in astonishment and dismay.

'I don't understand,' he began; 'you do not mean—'

'I do not mean to keep you here in luxury and idleness, when you have set my wishes at defiance, upset my plans, and frustrated the ambition of my life.'

'What was that?' his grandson interrupted.

'To leave the old firm as I found it, flourishing under the old name, that has been transmitted stainless from father to son for four generations—since the time of our founder, Simon Vanderhaven.' And he glanced at an old portrait by the chimney-piece, which seemed to look back at him with sympathy and approval.

'But my cousin Cornelius—' Bernhardt began.

'Your cousin is an excellent manager, and a keen man of business—somewhat too keen, perhaps—but he is not a Vanderhaven. I had hoped that your father would have been my successor, but he is gone before me. You will soon be the last of the old stock.'

Bernhardt was silent a moment, looking at his grandfather with compunction and regret. 'Grandfather,' he faltered, 'I did not understand—I did not know you felt it so deeply. Believe me, I am grieved to disappoint you, but—' 'Grieve for yourself, rather, if you disobey me,' was the sternly-spoken rejoinder. 'But I do not accept your decision as final,' added M. Vanderhaven as he rose; 'I give you to the end of the month to reconsider it.' Bernhardt followed him to the door, and held back the tapestry, looking wistfully into his face.

'It would be easy to decide if I had only myself to think of,' he muttered; 'but there is Annette—I mean there is some one else who has a right to be considered.'

The old gentleman stopped short on the threshold. 'A-ah?' he said interrogatively. 'And who is "Annette," if you please?'

'She is—her name is van Elven,' he stammered.

'The daughter of that van Elven who died bankrupt a few years ago?'

Bernhardt colored. 'He was an honorable man, though unfortunate. He left a name as stainless as our own.'

'Have I said to the contrary? But he died bankrupt, and left his wife and daughter to live on charity—or starve.'

'They do neither, Monsieur. Annette maintains herself and her mother by lace-making.'

The other made a sort of grimace. 'And you propose to make this little lace girl your wife?'

'With your permission, Monsieur.'

'Or without it,' was the dry addition. 'You will ask her advice in the matter we have been discussing, I suppose?'

'I—yes, I shall certainly consult her.'

'And let her decide for you,' the old merchant recommended, glancing shrewdly at him under his heavy brows. 'I will wager she takes my view of the subject when she knows what is at stake. Women are wonderfully clear-sighted and reasonable where their own interests are concerned. I leave my cause with perfect confidence in Mademoiselle Annette's hands.' And with an ironical bow and smile, he passed over the threshold, and closed the door.

Left to himself the young man paced the room with a face of troubled thought. Yes, Annette would take his grandfather's view of the case, he supposed, though not, as the latter had cynically suggested, from interested motives. It was not poverty she would fear, but the separation which was inevitable if he were cast at once on his own resources. It might be years before he could ask her to share his lot, and he had no right to expect that she should waste her youth in waiting for him. And yet, to give up the one purpose and ambition of his life: to turn his back on the luminous heights that rose before him, and descend to the gray and level plain! It was hard indeed. The sound of the chimes roused him from his troubled reflections. He glanced at his watch. 'A quarter to seven! I did not know it was so late. I promised to meet Annette on the Pont du Beguinage at sunset.' He put aside his brushes and palette, and exchanging his blouse for a coat left the house and took his way to one of the innumerable bridges which give the old city its Flemish name. He was first at the trysting-place.

The golden summer evening, the gently flowing water, the softly chiming bells all blended together in a charm that soothed and cheered him. He took out his pocket sketch-book, and was dotting down the outlines of the scene, when the sound of a light footstep made him turn. It was Annette. She did not see him at first, and he watched her as she advanced, glancing about her with her soft, short-sighted eyes. How sweet she looked, he thought, with her pretty, pensive mouth and dreamy eyes; those eyes which had always a shade of tender melancholy, even when her lips smiled, as they did most brightly when he came forward to meet her.

Yes, she was worth any sacrifice, he decided. His mind was made up now as to the course he should take.

'Have I kept you waiting?' she asked, giving him a dainty little hand that a duchess might have envied. 'I have been very busy finishing some work. Daylight grows precious after midsummer.'

'You try your eyes too much, dear,' he said, looking at her tenderly. 'You know they are not strong, and if you overwork them they may fail you altogether some day.'

'Do not suggest anything so terrible,' she said with a little shiver, passing her hand over them. 'Have you been drawing?' she continued, looking at his sketch-book.

'It is only an outline,' he returned, showing it to her.

'The view from here would make a beautiful picture,' she remarked; 'you must paint it some day, for me.'

'I shall paint no more, Annette.'

She looked up, startled. 'What do you mean?'

'I mean,' he returned with a forced laugh, 'that in future I am to be a slave of the quill instead of the brush. You remember I told you my grandfather wished me to enter the business when I was of age?'

'And you have consented?'

'Not yet, but I must. He tells me if I refuse he will turn me adrift; then you and I must part. That is not to be thought of, is it, darling?'

'So it is for my sake you are giving up your art?' she said regretfully.

'No, for my own, because I can live without art, but I can't live without you,' was his reply, as he drew her hand through his arm.

'And you are quite sure it does not grieve you to relinquish all your dreams of fame?' she questioned, with a wistful smile. 'Perhaps, after all, it would not have made you happier, if you had won it. "Laurels have a bitter taste," the old poet says.'

'Yes, but a true artist does not work for "laurels" only. The service of art is its own reward. I should hardly care for fame if I felt that I had produced good work, which would live when I was forgotten—as I once hoped to do. Ah well,' he added, with a quick sigh, 'I must forget my old dreams, and outlive my old self, if I can. Perhaps I shall develop an unsuspected genius for commerce—who knows?' He laughed rather heavily, and looked straight before him, as if he were gazing down the long gray vista of the new life on which he was to enter. That look and tone were a revelation to his companion. She realized for the first time what the sacrifice cost him.

'Bernhardt, you will not be happy,' she exclaimed with sudden conviction. 'You can never adapt yourself to a life so unsuited for you, in which all your talents and capabilities will be wasted. Your nature must be crushed to fit it. Your grandfather does not understand this, but I do, and I dare not accept such a sacrifice. Tell me, dear,' she went on, laying her hand on his arm, 'what would you do if you were free—if it were not for me, I mean?'

'I should borrow a few hundred francs of my cousin and go to Rome,' he answered.

'Yes; you could live cheaply there, and you would have congenial companions, and learn all that the great masters could teach you. Why should you not go?'

'And leave you, Annette?'

'Not for long, I hope. Dearest,' she added earnestly, 'I would rather part from you forever than live to feel that I had been the means of spoiling your life. You shall go to Rome.'

'No, no! do not tempt me,' he interposed, turning his head aside.

'Yes; for my sake,' she persisted. 'That you may win a name I shall be proud to bear some day.'

'That day may never come, Annette.'

'Everything comes to those who can wait,' she quoted, smiling, though her eyes were full of tears; 'and you would not have to wait long for success; I am sure of it.' His face flushed and paled; he looked troubled and wavering. 'Well,' he said at length, 'I need not decide now. I have a whole month to consider. Let us talk of something else.' She said no more, but she foresaw what his decision would be, and, bravely as she had spoken, her heart sank when she thought of the coming separation. She had a reason which Bernhardt did not guess for fearing the future. She had never acknowledged to him the dread which had haunted her lately, growing heavier every day. If he had suspected that hidden trouble, nothing would have induced him to leave her.

II.

On the morning of the first of July, Monsieur Vanderhaven sat at breakfast in his dining-room, a pleasant old room, the prevailing tint of which was a sober brown, relieved with brighter touches of color here and there, in a repoussé salver, or Gres-de-Flandres vase, and in the rich bindings of the books which lined one of the walls.

When he had finished his cup of café-au-lait, he touched the bell at his elbow. The summons was answered by his housekeeper, a stately, high-nosed old dame, wearing the cap and fichu of her native province of Liege.

'Tell Monsieur Bernhardt that I wish to speak to him.'

Instead of leaving the room she closed the door, and approached him mysteriously. 'He is not in the house, Monsieur,' she said. 'His bed has not been slept in, and—and I have just found this letter, addressed to you, on his table.'

She lingered, watching him curiously, as he opened it. He dismissed her with one sharp word, then read it through, his face growing darker with every line.

'So—he is gone to study in Rome,' he repeated, with a sour smile, when he had finished. 'Very well; he may starve in Rome. I have done with him.'

He took a vesta-match from the inkstand, twisted the letter, deliberately burnt it, and then mounted the stairs to the banquet-room. The painting materials were gone, but the unfinished portrait remained on the easel. He frowned as his eyes fell upon it. He guessed whom it represented, and his heart was bitter against this girl, who, it seemed from Bernhardt's letter, had encouraged him in his disobedience. A palette-knife lay on the ledge of the easel; in a sudden impulse of resentment, he took it up, and was about to cut the canvas from the frame, but as he raised his hand, the sweet eyes seemed to meet his with a wistful appeal, as if in deprecation of his anger. His hand fell, his brow relaxed; he gazed at the fair face with a sort of fascination.

Then, as he noted the execution of the picture, a new expression dawned in his eyes; a mingling of astonishment and half reluctant admiration. If the lad could paint in this way at twenty, what might he not achieve when his powers were matured? An uncomfortable feeling took possession of the old merchant. Had he been mistaken after all? Had Bernhardt done wisely in disobeying him? With an impatient movement of the head, he dismissed the unwelcome doubt, and taking the picture from the easel, turned it with its face to the wall, then left the room, locking the door and putting the key in his pocket.

'If anyone inquires after my grandson, you may say that he is travelling,' he told old Ursula briefly; and from that day Bernhardt's name was spoken no more in his old home.

The months went by. Summer waned into autumn, and autumn into winter—a winter of the 'good old-fashioned' type; invigorating to the young and healthy, but terrible to the weak, the aged, and the poor.

One bitter December afternoon, Annette van Elven and her mother were alone in the little room which now served them as bed and sitting-room both, on the first floor of a house in a dull grass grown side-street not far from the Cathedral.

Madame van Elven, a fair, fragile-looking woman, who had been beautiful in her youth, and was still attractive, though worn by suffering, sat in a cushioned armchair near the stove, while Annette crouched on the hearth, her head drooping, her hands idly folded on her lap, in an attitude of listless dejection. The snow outside was hardly whiter than her cheeks, and her eyes had a veiled look that made them more pathetic than ever.

'How quiet you are, dear!' her companion said, breaking a long silence; 'are you asleep?'

'No, I was thinking,' she answered with an effort. 'I was wondering what sort of Christmas Bernhardt would have in Rome.'

'A pleasant one, no doubt. Pleasanter than ours will be. Poverty weighs lightly on him: it is all part of the romance of his artist life. But with us it is bitter reality,' she added with a sigh. Annette did not reply, but her face grew if possible sadder than before.

'Did M. Lebrun pay you for the piece of lace you took to him this morning, dear?' asked Madame van Elven after a pause.

'No; he—I shall have to go again,' Annette answered, hesitatingly.

She dared not tell her mother the truth—namely, that the tradesman had declined her work, as too imperfect for sale. What she had long dreaded had come to pass: her sight would no longer serve for her employment.

'You are tired; I can tell by your voice,' her companion said tenderly, and putting out her hand, she drew the girl to her side. Annette let her head sink on her mother's knee, and closed her eyes with a deep, long-drawn sigh. Yes, she was tired; so tired that she almost felt as if it would be happiness to sleep and never wake again; to give up altogether the weary struggle that grew harder every day.

They were sitting in the same position when, ten minutes later, an unfamiliar step sounded on the stairs, and there was a tap at the door. Annette rose, smoothing her disordered hair, and opened it. A stranger stood there; a comely old woman, in the picturesque costume of a Liegeoise.

'Mademoiselle Annette van Elven?' she said interrogatively, and when the latter assented, handed her a letter adding: 'I have had some trouble to find you, Mam'selle. My master said I was to wait for an answer.'

'Is your master M. Lebrun?' Annette inquired.

'No; M. Vanderhaven,' the old servant replied, glancing shrewdly at her face.

The girl started, turning from white to red. Recovering from her surprise, however, she placed a chair for her visitor, lighted the lamp, and then, returning to her mother's side, read the note aloud.

'MADEMOISELLE.—I wish to see you, but am prevented by illness from calling upon you. Will you do me the favor to return with my servant? I shall not detain you long.—Yours,

'NICHOLAS VANDERHAVEN.'

'I suppose he is anxious to have news of Bernhardt,' was her mother's whispered comment. 'You will go, dear?'

'Yes,' Annette assented. 'Has M. Vanderhaven been long ill?' she asked Ursula, as she put on her hat and jacket.

'All the winter, on and off; it began with a bad cold. But he has never been quite the same since M. Bernhardt went away.' Annette said no more, and they presently left the house together.

'Please to come upstairs,' her companion said, when they were admitted to the old Guild house; and she led the way up the broad, oak staircase to the banquet-room. It was furnished now; a great wood fire burned on the wide hearth, and a Japanese screen shut out the draught. Monsieur Vanderhaven was seated near the fire, with his back toward them; a tall, gaunt figure in a gray dressing-gown and velvet cap. When his visitor entered he gave her a scrutinizing glance under his heavy brows, and bowed, but did not rise, as he motioned her to a seat.

'Mademoiselle van Elven,' he began when they were alone, 'I believe you are in correspondence with my grandson?'

'Yes, Monsieur,' she answered quietly, though her heart was fluttering. 'I have heard from him frequently since he left home.'

'Since you sent him away,' he corrected; 'it was by your advice, I believe, that he went?'

'I advised him, as I thought, for the best, and I have reason to believe that I was right. He tells me that he is making rapid progress, and that his pictures have already attracted attention. I believe there is a brilliant future before him.'

'Humph! we shall see,' was the remark. 'Be kind enough to give me his address. It may be necessary for me to write to him,' and he pushed the inkstand toward her.

She took up the pen, but there seemed to be a mist before the paper. After one attempt she shook her head, and held it out to him.

'My eyes will not serve me at all to-night,' she said with a deprecating smile; 'the address is—'

'What is the matter with your eyes?' he interrupted.

'I have over-tried them at lace-making. They have been failing me some time.'

'You ought to have advice about them,' said M. Vanderhaven, more gently than he had yet spoken. He had felt bitterly toward her when she entered, but somehow his resentment seemed to be melting away before the gentle composure of her manner, and the patient sweetness of her smile.

'I have, Monsieur. The doctor tells me there is no organic disease; if I could give them complete rest for a time they would serve me for my whole life to come.'

'And are you resting them?'

'I must now—against my will,' she answered with an involuntary sigh. 'I can work at my lace-pillow no longer.'

'And how do you intend to employ yourself?' She shook her head and made no reply. He looked at her steadily a moment, slowly rubbing his chin, then dropped the pen in ink.

'You said the address was—?'

'Number 12, Via Margutta, Rome,' she answered, and rose, thinking the interview was at an end.

'Wait a moment,' he interposed as he wrote. 'I have something to say to you.' He seemed in no hurry to say it, however. Having written the address, he methodically folded the paper and placed it in his pocket-book, took off his spectacles, and put them in their case; then looked up.

'I have a proposal to make to you,' he began abruptly. 'It has occurred to me that I may be able to assist you and serve myself at the same time. I am in failing health, I need a companion and attendant—some one who would not set my nerves on edge as professional nurses do. Should you be inclined to accept the post?'

She looked at him as if doubting whether she had heard correctly.

'Do you mean—to live here, Monsieur?'

'Yes. Of course you could see your mother every day, and I should enable you to give her the comfort and attendance she needs.'

'You are very kind,' she faltered, 'but—'

'Am I so formidable that you dare not trust yourself with me?' he asked with a grave smile which softened his features wonderfully, giving them a vague resemblance to Bernhardt's. Her face caught the reflection of his, and brightened suddenly. 'No, indeed,' she said with an answering smile; 'if I hesitated, it was because I might not be competent—'

'Then you will come?' he interrupted.

'Yes, Monsieur, and I will do my best to please you. It will make me happy to be of service to—'

'Bernhardt's grandfather?' he finished; 'just so. Then that is settled. Shake hands on it.' When she gave him her hand he detained it, looking up at her so intently that she blushed, she hardly knew why.

'When are you going to write to this distinguished artist?' he demanded.

'Very shortly. To-morrow perhaps. Have you any message for him?' she asked wistfully. He paused, apparently forgetting that he still held her hand, and looked thoughtfully at the fire. She watched his face anxiously, reading there the signs of a struggle between pride and affection.

'Tell him I am glad to learn that he is making good progress in the profession he has chosen—'

'Yes?' she prompted, as he paused. He glanced at her wistful face and smiled.

'And you may say that if he is not too busy to allow himself a holiday, he may spend Christmas with me—with us, that is.' The girl's heart leaped; a thrill of exquisite happiness brought the tears to her eyes. With a sudden impulse she stooped and kissed the wrinkled hand that held her own.

The old merchant patted her cheek. 'Tut, tut, silly child; save your kisses for some one who has a right to them,' he said. Two days later Annette began her new duties, and was soon as much at home in the old Guild house as if she had lived there for years. She was happy in her new life, and her young presence so brightened the house that M. Vanderhaven found himself wondering how he could have endured its gloom and solitude before she came.

The time passed pleasantly to both of them, and every day brought nearer the meeting which, in his heart, the old merchant longed for as much as she did, though he seldom mentioned his grandson's name.

'Only five days till Christmas,' Annette remarked one evening, looking up from the knitting which kept her fingers busy while her eyes and thoughts were free. They were in the banquet room; Monsieur Vanderhaven reclining in a capacious leather *fauteuil* near the fire, while Annette sat opposite to him in a low, straight-backed tapestry chair. The old room, with its panelled walls and antique furniture, formed a picturesque background to her girlish figure. Her companion was staring thoughtfully at the fire, with the newspaper on his knee. Her words roused him from his abstraction.

'So soon? I had forgotten how time went.'

'Bernhardt will be with us on Christmas Eve,' she added.

'Ah! and that reminds me; there is something I intended to do before he returned.' He turned his chair to the table. 'Give me pen and ink, my dear.'

She placed writing materials before him, and then paused, struck by the haggard pallor of his face.

'Are you feeling worse to-night, Monsieur?'

'Worse? No, child; I am better, if anything,' he answered cheerfully. 'I was thinking, only a moment ago, that I might yet live to see my great-grandchildren round me in the old house.' He glanced at his companion, who suddenly, sweetly, strangely blushed, and became absorbed in her work again. His pen travelled rapidly over the paper, only pausing now and then to make an alteration or addition. When he had covered four pages with his clear, firm handwriting, he glanced over what he had written, seemed satisfied with it, and made a fair copy on a fresh sheet. Then he looked up.

'Will you tell Ursula and Jacob that I want them for a few moments?'

She left the room, and gave his message to the two old servants, remaining downstairs till they returned, which they did very shortly, looking mysterious and important. As she reentered the room, she fancied she heard the click of a drawer or door hastily shut; but the screen being so arranged as to inclose the hearth, she could see nothing until she had passed round it. Then she found Monsieur Vanderhaven standing with his arm on the massive chimney-piece, watching the burning of a piece of paper, which he had just thrown upon the logs. He did not speak till she had been seated some moments.

'I have been making my will,' he said abruptly at length; 'I made one six months ago, in a moment of anger, but that shall be destroyed before Bernhardt returns. By this new one I have left him everything except the business, and that he will not grudge to his cousin. I shall give it into Maitre Janssen's keeping to-morrow. Meantime,' he added with a curious smile, 'I have put it in a safe place, where it would be difficult to—'

He stopped abruptly, putting his hand to his head. The blood suffused his face to the temples, then retreated, leaving him lividly pale. He staggered, and would have fallen if Annette had not supported him. She bent over him in alarm as he sank into a chair.

'It is nothing,' he gasped; 'a passing faintness—' He drew one or two heavy breaths, and seemed to recover somewhat, though his face was still white and haggard.

'Good girl, good girl,' he said touching her cheek as she bent over him; 'you deserve to be happy, and you shall be. You will live here, you and Bernhardt; he will have this for his painting-room again. He will make a name—yes, the lad was right; he is an artist. Never let the old house go into strange hands—I love it. It has sheltered my people for more than a century; ever since the time of old Simon Vanderhaven, yonder,' and he nodded toward the portrait with a smile of friendly recognition, then sat silent, looking into the bright hollows of the fire.

'I am drowsy,' he said at last; 'I think I could sleep.'

Annette stood near him till his eyes closed, then returned to her seat. But she could not work. She felt uneasy and depressed. Her eyes dwelt with a sort of fascination on the motionless figure opposite, only glancing away now and then at the flickering fire, or out through the uncurtained window at the bare moon-lit Place, where the shadows of the quaint old houses lay black on the snow-whitened pavement. About a quarter of an hour had passed thus, when she heard the muffled roll of carriage-wheels approaching the house. They paused at the door, and there was a knock which sounded unnaturally loud in the silence. She started to her feet. Could it be Bernhardt, who had arrived before his time? was the first thought that flashed across her.

Assuring herself that M. Vanderhaven was still sleeping, she went out into the landing, and leaned over the heavy carved balustrade, looking down into the lamp-lit hall. Yes—it was Bernhardt who stood there laughing at old Ursula's shrill questions and exclamations, as he dismissed the carriage and closed the door. Annette's glad little cry caught his ear at once. He looked up, flung his travelling wraps on to the floor, and bounded upstairs.

'My darling, my darling!' was all he could say at first, between a shower of kisses. 'How I have longed for you all these weary months!'

'And I for you,' she whispered shyly, as she looked up into his face, bronzed and older-looking, but handsomer than ever, she thought, with a thrill of pride.

'And to find you here to welcome me; it seems like a fairy tale! You must have bewitched my grandfather. And your eyes, darling?' he went on tenderly, bending to look into them. 'If you had told me that trouble before, I should never have left you. Are they better?'

'So much better that I warn you I shall be able to detect all the faults in your pictures,' was her laughing reply. 'But you haven't explained yet why you are here four days before your time? We did not expect you till Christmas Eve.'

'I feared if I delayed I should be snow-bound. There have been several falls, and some of the lines are blocked.'

'I am glad you came to-day,' she said more gravely. 'I have been so anxious.'

'Is my grandfather worse?' he asked quickly.

'I fear so, though he will not admit it. He was speaking of you just now. I know he longs to see you. Come.'

Hand in hand they passed into the room, bright with fire-light and lamp-light. The old merchant had not moved. His head rested against the back of the chair; his hands were folded in an attitude of peaceful repose.

'He is asleep,' she whispered; 'he— Oh, Bernhardt, what is it?' For the young man, after one glance at the placid face, uttered an inarticulate cry, and sank on his knees before the chair. Monsieur Vanderhaven was sleeping 'the sleep that knows no waking.'

III.

It was Christmas Eve. The grave had closed over Nicholas Vanderhaven. All the dismal bustle of the funeral was over, and those interested in the old merchant's will were assembled in the dining-room to hear it read by the notary. The party was not a large one, consisting only of Bernhardt, his cousin, Cornelius Dewint, from Antwerp, a stout, florid, prosperous-looking personage of middle age, with a loud voice and a self-assertive manner; Ursula, and Jacob the butler, and lastly, Annette, who was present at Bernhardt's desire. The notary, a little, spare, high-dried man, in a dusty brown wig, and gold eye-glass, glanced round at the party as he unfolded a sheet of crackling parchment.

'This will was deposited with me by my late client some six months ago,' he began. 'It —'

'Excuse me, Maitre Janssen,' Bernhardt interrupted; 'I am informed that there is a later one, which my grandfather made only a few hours before his death.'

'Yes, he wrote it in my presence,' Annette put in.

'And we witnessed it, Jacob and I,' spoke old Ursula. 'The master sent for us on purpose.'

Monsieur Dewint wheeled round in his chair, and stared from one speaker to another, while the lawyer looked under his eye-glass at Annette. 'Indeed? I was not aware of it,' he said.

'Monsieur Vanderhaven intended to have placed it with you the next morning,' she continued. 'He said the first will was made in a moment of irritation, and he wished it to be destroyed before Bernhardt returned.'

'As Mademoiselle was so far in my uncle's confidence, perhaps she can tell us the contents of this second will?' suggested Cornelius, with a veiled sneer which brought the color to Bernhardt's cheek.

'Yes,' Annette answered quietly. 'M. Vanderhaven told me that his grandson would inherit everything except the business at Antwerp, which was left to yourself, Monsieur.' He gave a sort of grunt, and pulled his beard discontentedly.

'Well, where is it? Why is it not produced?' was his demand.

'We have not looked for it yet,' Bernhardt replied, 'but it must be somewhere in the banquet-room, as my grandfather never left that apartment alive after he made it.'

'Then we must find it at once,' Maitre Janssen said, rising. 'If it exists this is so much waste paper,' and he threw the parchment on to the table.

'All the same, perhaps you will oblige me by reading that,' Cornelius Dewint suggested. The notary glanced at Bernhardt.

'By all means, if my cousin wishes it,' replied the latter. 'I think I can guess the contents.'

The document was short and to the point. The business at Antwerp, and all the real and personal estate—chargeable with annuities for the old servants—were left to Cornelius Dewint, on condition that he neither let, sold or demolished the old Guildhouse, while Bernhardt came in for an ironical bequest of five hundred francs—'to buy paint and canvas.' Annette looked distressed, and the young man flushed hotly.

'I don't wonder my grandfather was anxious to revoke a will so unjust,' he commented.

'It remains to be proved whether he did revoke it,' was his cousin's remark. 'I have a sort of presentiment that this second document will not be forthcoming.'

Bernhardt answered only by a slight shrug, as he rose and led the way to the banquet-room. Nothing had been disturbed since the old merchant's death. His chair still stood in its place with the screen behind it; the ashes remained on the cold hearth. Annette's knitting lay where she had thrown it down. Inexpressibly forlorn it all looked in the waning light of the winter afternoon, and in their various ways every member of the party felt the depressing influence of the scene.

'If the paper is within these four walls we shall soon find it,' the notary observed, unconsciously lowering his voice. And indeed, with the exception of an old press, where Bernhardt had been in the habit of keeping his painting materials, there seemed no place where it could be stowed away.

The will was not in the press, however, nor was it to be found elsewhere. They searched systematically; examining every nook and corner of the old room, sounding the panelling and the flooring, looking behind and under the furniture, and not desisting in their quest till everyone, except Annette, was convinced that it was in vain.

'But it must be here,' the girl exclaimed excitedly; 'it cannot have been spirited away. M. Vanderhaven told me that he had put it in a safe place——'

'The fire, probably,' was Cornelius Dewint's suggestion. 'My belief is—with all deference to Mademoiselle—that my uncle changed his mind at the last moment, and destroyed it.'

'I am positive he did not,' she asserted. 'He was scarcely alone with it a moment, for directly the servants left him, I returned, and it was then that he told me the contents. He was standing there by the chimney-piece.' Bernhardt, who stood near the window, looking out into the dusk, turned and beckoned to her. 'Did you not tell me that he had been burning a paper?' he asked in an undertone. 'Yes, but it ——. I thought it was the rough draft of the will.' 'Might he not, by inadvertence, have destroyed the will itself?' She did not answer, but her heart sank. It seemed only too likely that such was the case. There was a pause. It was nearly dark now, and the faces of the little group were lit by a lamp on the chimney-piece. The young man stood with his back to the rest, looking down at the market-place, where the snow was falling heavily. At length the silence was broken by Monsieur Dewint, who left the notary's side and approached his cousin.

'Well, Bernhardt, you see I was right,' he began, in a loud, cheerful voice, rattling the loose cash in his pockets. 'This mysterious document is non est inventus. Of course I feel for your disappointment; still, you can hardly expect me to give up the property offhand to please you. Such generosity is rare—off the stage. You are not going to dispute the will, I presume?'

'No. I think it an unjust one, and I believe my grandfather had intended to revoke it, but no other being producible, it is perfectly valid. You are in your own house, cousin,' and he bowed to the new master with formal politeness.

The latter glanced about him disparagingly. 'H'm—it is no great acquisition. If I had my way I should pull down the old baraque, and build a good house in its place. Well,' he continued, 'suppose we go downstairs; this room is as cold as a vault.' He passed out, followed by Maitre Janssen, but the other two lingered.

'Annette, my sweet, do not look so sorrowful,' Bernhardt said, encircling her with his arm; 'why, the loss of this fortune seems to trouble you more than it does me.'

'For your sake,' she faltered; 'for myself, I am not afraid of poverty. It is so strange, so inexplicable, that the will should have disappeared in this way,' she continued. 'I am convinced that it is in the room at this moment, if we only knew where to look for it.'

She moved from his side and cast her eyes thoughtfully round. He shook his head.

'It is not here, or we should have found it,' he said. 'Try to think no more of it, dear; we cannot ——' The words died on his lips as he looked at his companion. She was standing in the middle of the room, her hands hanging at her sides, her eyes fixed and dilated, gazing into space. Every trace of color had faded from her face. He sprang to her side.

'Great heavens, Annette—what is it? Are you ill?'

She drew a long breath, and looked at him like one awaking from a dream. 'No, I am not ill,' she whispered, 'but I have the strangest feeling. As if—as if there were someone else in the room with us—' She shivered and glanced nervously round the long, shadowy apartment, which was only half-lighted by the lamp on the chimney-piece. Bernhardt involuntarily did the same, but they were the only occupants.

'You see that we are alone,' he said. 'You are tired and overexcited, darling; you need rest. It is snowing so heavily that you cannot leave the house at present. Go and lie down, and I will send Ursula to you.'

She acquiesced mechanically, and allowed him to lead her to the door. Her hand was deadly cold, and her eyes looked dreamy and absent. He kissed her cheek, and detained her a moment, looking into her face with anxious tenderness; but she turned from him without another word, and mounted the stairs to the little room she had called her own.

When the moon's silver disc rose behind the Belfry Tower, one broad ray of cold ethereal light streamed on to the bed where Annette lay, still dressed, and sleeping profoundly. For several hours her rest was tranquil and oblivious, but toward midnight she was visited by a strange dream.

She seemed to be still lying on the bed, in the half-conscious state between sleeping and waking. Her eyes were open, but she was only vaguely aware of surrounding objects, of the moonlight streaming on the bed, and the glimpse of white house roofs seen through the window opposite.

Suddenly she was roused, she thought, from this dreamy lethargy, by a voice in the room, close to her, calling her name. She started and sat up, thrilling in every nerve, but not with fear. Drawing aside the curtains, she looked toward the spot from which the voice proceeded.

The room, save where the moonbeams lighted it, was lost in shadow, yet she fancied she could discern the outlines of a figure, standing near the hearth. As she looked, it moved forward into the ray of light by the bedside, and, then, with a sudden shock of startled recognition, she saw that it was Monsieur Vanderhaven, who stood looking at her with eyes full of urgent purpose.

'Annette!' the low but imperious voice repeated, "the will must be found. Come!" and he beckoned her toward the door.

After the first moment she seemed, with the curious insensibility of the dreamer, to feel neither surprise nor fear. She rose without hesitation and followed him down the stairs to the banquet-room. The door was partly open, and the room within was lighted by a lamp, as when she had seen it last.

Her conductor crossed over to the hearth, and extended his hand to the portrait of his ancestor, which hung on a panel to the left of the chimney-piece.

'Master Simon can keep a secret,' he said, with the grave smile so familiar to her; 'you would never have thought of searching here. Look!'

She pressed forward eagerly as he touched the picture, but at the same moment a hand was laid on her shoulder, and another voice exclaimed, "Annette!"

Then with a start and a cry she woke—woke in earnest this time—to find herself standing in the Banquet room, with Bernhardt's astonished face bending over her. She looked round bewilderedly, trembling with a vague terror. Then, as remembrance returned, an expression of blank disappointment crossed her face.

'Oh, was it only a dream?'

'Were you asleep?' he exclaimed. 'If I had known that I should not have ventured to wake you. I was sorting and destroying some old sketches in these folios. It took me longer than I had expected, but I had just finished and was about to leave the room when you entered. You walked straight to the fireplace and looked intently at the portrait. You were stretching out your hand towards it when I touched you. Did you dream about it, dear?'

'Yes. Oh, Bernhardt, such a strange dream.'

'What was it? tell me,' he said, making her sit down.

In low, awe-struck tones she related it, glancing now and then over her shoulder at the shadowy room behind them. 'It was so real, so vivid,' she concluded, 'that I can hardly believe it was merely a dream.'

He had listened with breathless interest and growing excitement. When she had finished he started to his feet.

'Dream or not,' he exclaimed, 'I believe it has given us a clew to the hiding place of the will. It never occurred to us that there might be a cupboard behind that portrait.'

Annette clasped her hands. 'Oh—let us look at once!'

'Hold the lamp, I will take the picture down,' he said; but he found this was impossible, as it was fastened with cramps to the panelled wall.

'There must be a spring somewhere,' he muttered, passing his hand down by the side of the frame, 'or else—stay, what is this?'

His fingers had encountered a slight obstruction in the polished woodwork; a small metal knob or button, which was effectually concealed by the shadow of the heavy frame.

He pressed it, and immediately the panel with the portrait upon it started open, disclosing a deep square cupboard. The lovers looked at each other, too excited to speak.

'Hold the lamp higher,' he whispered, putting his hand into the cupboard.

The first thing brought to light was a bundle of old letters, tied with faded ribbon, and still retaining the ghost of their first perfume; then came a miniature in a case of Bernhardt's father, when a boy, and finally—a folded sheet of letter paper, inscribed in Monsieur Vanderhaven's clear, commercial hand, 'This is my last Will.'

Annette placed the lamp on the table, and looked over his shoulder as he unfolded the paper. One glance showed him that the contents were as she had stated. The business was left to his cousin, and all the rest, without reserve or condition, was his own. Their eyes met in an eloquent look.

'But for your dream we should never have found it,' he said. 'How strange—how mysterious it seems!'

'Was it only a dream?' she questioned, under her breath.

They were silent; a feeling of awe and reverence overpowered them. 'If he knows, he is happy now as we are,' the young man said at last. They clasped hands and looked into each other's eyes, reading there the brightness of the future, from which all shadows and perplexities had passed away.

And as they stood thus, hand in hand, in the silence of the sleeping house, suddenly there rang out from the Belfrey Tower the midnight carillon, ushering in the blessed Christmas morn. Sweet, strange, solemn chimes, falling on the silence in a silvery stream of music, like the voices of wandering angels, singing, 'Peace on earth, good will toward men!'

'A happy Christmas and a good new year!' Bernhardt exclaimed, as he bent to kiss the sweet face uplifted to his.—[The Argosy.

CANTANKEROSITY AND THE BRITISH PHILISTINE.

From London Society.

In a mild sense we may even go so far as to admit that most individual characters may have—let us take the smoother term, and say—their angularities. We may find that, without knowing it, we may be holding up a red rag to a bull. During a very famous litigation it was found necessary at somedinner-tables in Hampshire to put a slip of paper on the plate of each guest, saying that "the Claimant" was not to be a topic of conversation. This matter of tabooed topic, by the way, might almost claim an excursus for itself. An old lady was thus expatiating to a young person on the changing fashion of tabooed subjects: "My dear, when I was a young woman there were three subjects on which people in good society never allowed themselves to talk—their money, their stomach and their religion. It now appears to me that people never talk about anything else."

It is possible to go through a great many subjects before you arrive at that particular one on which a person may be cranky. A man on whom a commission of lunacy was sitting gave the court a great deal of trouble. It seemed impossible to detect any delusion in his case. All his answers were prompt, gentlemanly, full of shrewdness, and good sense. The case against him seemed to break down utterly. Then some one handed to counsel a slip of paper with these words, "Try him on Ezekiel." "Perhaps, sir, you can tell us something about the prophet Ezekiel?" "Oh, certainly," said the gentleman, with a smile and a bow. "The fact is, that I am myself the prophet Ezekiel." From this point there was no difficulty at all in bringing out his delusions. Some very sensible people hold the belief that every man is more or less cranky on some one point or other. I have seen a patient in a lunatic asylum when the medical men assured me that the lunacy simply consisted in bad temper and cantankerousness carried to the highest possible point. The regular British Philistine is always more or less annoying. He is striving to bring down everything in heaven and on earth to his own poor level. His very breath has a flavor of the mistral or the sirocco about it. He spreads aridity around him. His mere presence has a discouraging and withering effect. His whole life is one prolonged cantankerosity. He has 'a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart,' and every other heart about him. This is a kind of cantankerousness which is peculiarly repellent when the crankiness is all about cash. I have heard of an affecting deathbed scene of a British Philistine. The British agriculturist was dying, and almost his last words were to inquire of his bailiff how much had been offered for his black pig. "Eighteen shillings," was the response. "Try then for the pun', Jem," were the last words of all.

THE EMPEROR'S PROGRESS.

A STUDY IN THREE STAGES.

(On the Busts of Nero in the Uffizi.)

I.

A child of brighter than the morning's birth
And lovelier than all smiles that may be smiled
Save only of little children undefiled,
Sweet, perfect, witless of their own dear worth,
Live rose of love, mute melody of mirth,
Glad as a bird is when the woods are mild,
Adorable as is nothing save a child,
Hails with wide eyes and lips his life on earth,
His lovely life with all its heaven to be
And whoso reads the name inscribed or hears,
Feels his own heart a frozen well of tears,
Child, for deep dread and fearful pity of thee
Whom God would not let rather die than see
The incumbent horror of impending years.

II.

Man that wast godlike being a child, and now,
No less than kinglike, art no more in sooth
For all thy grace and lordliness of youth,
The crown that bids men's branded foreheads bow
Much more has branded and bowed down thy brow
And gnawn upon it as with fire or tooth
Of steel or snake so sorely, that the truth
Seems here to bear false witness. Is it thou,
Child? And is all the summer of all thy spring,
This? Are the smiles that drew men's kisses down
All faded and transfigured to the frown
That grieves thy face? Art thou this weary thing?
Then is no slave's load heavier than a crown
And such a thrall no bondman as a king.

III.

Misery, beyond all men's most miserable,
Absolute, whole, defiant of defence,
Inevitable, inexplicable, intense,
More vast than heaven is high, more deep than hell,
Past cure or charm of solace or of spell,
Possesses and pervades the spirit and sense
Whereto the expanse of the earth pays tribute; whence
Breeds evil only, and broods on fumes that swell
Rank from the blood of brother and mother and wife.
"Misery of miseries, all is misery," saith
The heavy fair-faced hateful head, at strife
With its own lusts that burn with feverous breath,
Lips which the loathsome bitterness of life,
Leaves fearful of the bitterness of death.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

SHERIDAN, THE DELIGHTFUL DEBTOR.

From Temple Bar.

Sheridan's coal merchant, one Robert Mitchell, had a heavy demand against him for coals, which he could not get settled. One day, having lost all patience, he attacked the great manager mercilessly, and swore he would not leave the house without the whole of his money, which amounted to several hundred pounds. Sheridan had not so many shillings in his possession at the time. "It's very true, my dear Bob, all that you say," replied Sheridan; "I'm really very sorry, but I say, Bob, you don't want it all to-day, hey? won't a part do?" "No, sir," retorted the enraged creditor, "it won't. I must have it, I will have it; I daren't go home without every farthing of it. My wife is distracted, my house is beset with creditors, and, by G—d, I won't leave this room without the money." "Wouldn't half do to-day?" pleaded the manager, "and a bill for the remainder." No, the coal merchant would have his bond to the utmost farthing. Then Sheridan paused, and in a voice of deep emotion exclaimed: "Then would to heaven I could assist you! I cannot; but" (diving a hand into his pocket) "one thing I can, I will, I ought to do—there," grasping Mitchell's hand, "never let it be said that while Sheridan had a guinea in his pocket he refused it to his friend, Bob Mitchell." Mitchell stood aghast for a moment, then, pocketing the guinea, rushed out of the house, and to the latest hour of his life never tired of displaying the last guinea that his friend Sheridan had in the world.

Michael Kelly relates another story as good. During the time that he was acting manager of Drury Lane, the narrator became responsible for a debt he had contracted for the theatre, and Sheridan, as usual, failing to met it, Kelly was arrested. Sheridan at once sent for the hard-hearted creditor, remonstrated with him upon his cruelty, reasoned with him upon the hardship of the law of imprisonment for debt, pointed out that he had acted in an arbitrary, unchristian manner, until he had so thoroughly softened and convinced him that before the man left the house, Sheridan had borrowed £200 of him, and left upon his mind an impression that he had been highly favored by the great manager deigning to accept the favor. A creditor's levee was held daily in his house; his library, parlor, butler's room, and even the staircase were every morning filled with a motley crowd, anxiously listening for the sound of his footstep. When at last he came, elegantly dressed, all smiles and urbanity, shaking hands with one, nodding to another, he seemed to cast a charm over all; fellows that had been raging like tigers a few minutes before, could scarcely summon the courage to state their errand, while others seemed actually to forget what brought them there. Byron relates in his journals how he once found Sheridan at his lawyer's, and learned that he had come to stave off an action from his wine merchant. "I can vouch," says Byron, "that my attorney is by no means the tenderest of men, or particularly accessible to any kind of impression out of the statute or record; and yet Sheridan in half an hour had found the way to soften and subdue him in such a manner that I almost think he would have thrown his client (an honest man with all the laws and some justice on his side) out of the window, had he come in at that moment." His cool assurance never failed him in an extremity. One night he was stopped by footpads in company with Challie, the wine merchant. "My friend can accommodate you," he said to the fellows, "and as for myself, I tell you what I can do, I can give you my note of hand."

Writing to Moore (1815), Byron says: "Perhaps you heard of a late answer of Sheridan to the watchman, who found him bereft of that 'divine particle of air' called reason. He, the watchman who found Sherry in the street fuddled and bewildered, and almost insensible: 'Who are you, sir?' No answer. 'What's your name?' A hiccup. 'What's your name?' Answer, in a slow, deliberate, impressive tone: 'Wilberforce?'"

THE BEGINNING OF DE LESSEPS'S LUCK.

From The Pall Mall Gazette.

The Empress was the Isabella the Catholic of the Suez scheme. But for the Spanish ardor with which she sustained it, the Isthmus would still divide the Red from the Mediterranean Sea. "Your head," she said (speaking of course in a figure) to Comte Walewski, "depends on the skill you show in helping my cousin to cut his canal." M. de Lesseps's father, who was descended from the architect of the Cathedral of Edinburgh, was sent with Lucien Bonaparte to Madrid, because he had been brought up at Bayonne and could talk Spanish as well as French. Lucien was the first Ambassador named to the Court of Charles IV. by Napoleon. His mission was to obtain the retrocession of Louisiana, which Louis XV. had allowed to slip from his hands. M. de Lesseps the elder went about always with him, and was the soul of his diplomacy. The New-Orleans affair brought him into relations with the United States consuls, the most intelligent of whom was Mr. Kirkpatrick, who was in business at Malaga. M. de Lesseps proceeded to that town, and, assisted by Kirkpatrick, who, like himself, was of Scotch origin—but less remotely—studied the resources of Andalusia and the political condition of the south of Spain. They were drawn closer together by a romantic affair which sprang up. A notable of the province, Senor Grevigny, had two very pretty daughters, with one of whom the consul fell in love. The French diplomat became enamored of the youngest, and as Lucien Bonaparte was in high favor at the Court of Madrid her father allowed her to marry M. de Lesseps, with whom she went to reside in Paris, where, in 1804, she gave birth to Ferdinand. Her eldest sister became Mrs. Kirkpatrick, and the mother of the Comtesse de Montijo, who was drawn by her De Lesseps kindred to winter in Paris when her daughters had grown up. "Thus you see," observed M. de Lesseps, "what a number of great events have in *l'enchainement des choses* depended upon my father's early knowledge of the Spanish tongue."

Another "hinge event" which led to the execution of the Suez Canal scheme was the elder Lesseps having divined in a poor and unlettered Turkish officer, Mehemet Ali, a vast genius and the man who was to break down the power of the Mamelukes. The French diplomat reported in this sense to his Government and was instructed to be guided by his own judgment in bringing the officer forward. M. de Lesseps invited the Turk to his house, and showed himself in various ways his friend. But suddenly the officer withdrew from his company and kept out of the way. When Mehemet was a great man he said to M. Ferdinand de Lesseps: "Your father must have been puzzled to think what my reason was for keeping aloof from him after I had accepted so much kindness. It was this. A silver knife and fork, I heard the servants say, had been stolen from his table at a dinner to which I went. I was so poor that I fancied I would pass in his eyes for being the thief, and never dared after to return." Soon after Mehemet had related this anecdote he asked M. Ferdinand de Lesseps to allow Prince Said, his son, to pass his afternoons at the French Consulate, in order that he might pick up the French that was spoken there. The boy grew fondly attached to the intelligent and very kind-hearted diplomat. When he was Viceroy and the Suez concession was asked for, he gave M. de Lesseps a *carte blanche*.